



DNA — Convicting the Guilty, Exonerating the Innocent

Expanded Data Base a Tool for Solving Crime, Preserving Rights; New Lab in Hamilton Will Provide State-of-the-Art Forensic Analysis

In the waning days of 2004, residents of Camden city became concerned about an apparent serial rapist in their midst after three similar attacks occurred in the city's downtown and university sections.

Within weeks of the third attack, DNA testing had confirmed that all three sex crimes were in fact carried out by the same man. The man, however, was no longer a threat — he was dead.

The rapist had been shot to death by a Camden merchant during an attempted armed robbery. Posthumous testing of the man's DNA established him as the same attacker who'd committed the three rapes in downtown Camden. The minds of the public were put at ease and law enforcement was able to turn its attention to other criminal activity.

The future of criminal investigation is scientific evidence. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) carries genetic information in cells and is the most reliable forensic evidence. It is the law enforcement tool for the 21st Century.

DNA science made a difference in New Jersey in 2004, and it will continue to do so in the future as law enforcement seeks more effective methods for solving crimes and ensuring public safety.

However, DNA is not only vital to solving crimes, it is also a critical tool in exonerating the innocent.

In 2003 and 2004, the Attorney General's Office made the expansion and strengthening of New Jersey's DNA capabilities a top priority — and the effort was a success.

The Attorney General's Office:

- ❖ **Worked with the State Legislature to enact a new law that expanded the pool of convicted offenders required to provide DNA samples.**

Under the law, any person convicted of a first, second, third, or fourth degree offense (felonies) must now provide a DNA sample. In addition, convicted offenders who are already in custody, on probation or under parole supervision must also provide their DNA.

- ❖ **Trained more than 700 law enforcement officers throughout the State in DNA collection,** including members of the Department of Corrections, the Parole Board and Juvenile Justice Commission, as well as corrections personnel at each of the state's 21 county jails, and members of each county Sheriff's Department.

- ❖ **Formed a Combined DNA Indexing System Working Group and Compliance Unit** to oversee collection of DNA samples.

The continuing expansion of New Jersey's DNA data base gives police and prosecutors a powerful scientific tool to protect the public.

The greatest beneficiaries will be the victims of unsolved crimes — like the victims of the Camden rapist — in which a perpetrator is unidentified, but has left biological evidence at the crime scene. Not only survivors of sexual assault, but the families of murder victims and children who cannot identify their abusers will have their cold cases revived.

DNA technology has advanced to the point where minute amounts of biological material can yield a profile that is so unique to the individual that it is virtually unassailable. For offenders, the process of donating a biological sample is quick, simple and painless. Samples are obtained via a buccal swab — a swab of the inside of the cheek.

As a matter of crime-scene collection, law enforcement can obtain DNA from a broad array of items including cigarette butts, chewing gum, eyeglasses, telephone receivers, drinking glasses, kitchen utensils, and napkins. This capability is vital, because criminals often leave such DNA evidence at crime scenes.



As part of the Attorney General's expanded DNA database initiative, DNA samples have been collected from approximately 94,500 convicted offenders since September 2003. In conjunction with this effort, the State has also trained local, county and state level law enforcement officers in proper DNA collection.

Highly-trained personnel assigned to the new Forensic Science Laboratory at the State Police Technology Center in Hamilton Township (far left, immediate left and below) provide full-range forensic services in the inspection and analysis of DNA.

- ❖ **Opened a new, state-of-the-art Forensic Science Laboratory at the State Police Technology Center in Hamilton Township.** The new laboratory provides full-time forensic services in the inspection and analysis of DNA — and other crime-related evidence — not only from New Jersey, but from across the United States. As part of the Attorney General's expanded DNA database initiative, the State hired an additional 40 scientists with expertise in DNA analysis.
- ❖ **Established an internship program at The College of New Jersey designed to encourage college students to explore careers in forensic science.** As part of the initiative, the Attorney General's Office provides State Police Laboratory internships for qualified TCNJ science majors who seek to work in the area of DNA analysis.

